**Town Hall Debate**

**Highway Development**

**Background:**

You live in a town situated in a river valley. It is surrounded by a forest that is situated in the river valley and stretches up along the valley walls. Most houses in the community are situated in the main town. The residents cherish the forest and the water in the area. They use it for recreational purposes such as cross-country skiing, hiking and fishing along with domestic needs. Many local businesses also rely on the natural resources in the area.

The town council received a proposal from the provincial government outlining the prospects of highway development close to their town. The development will impact the biophysical and socio-economic environment.

Is change necessary or should the area be left alone?

Need to Know Information:

* The valley is part of a migration corridor for birds
* The river provides habitat for several species of fish
* The forest is a source of food and habitat for wildlife as well as the source of water for the community
* The forest, wildlife and fish are the community’s economic and recreational base.
* The valley walls are thick with cedar, oak and pine. Several log homes are located here.

1. **Distribute Role Cards**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In Support of….but may also have some objections   * Commuter * Road worker * Forest worker * Land developer * Department of highways official * Gas station owner * Drive-thru restaurant owner | Mostly against…but may also see the benefits   * Local homeowner * Artist * Biologist * Small fish farm owner * Riding academy trainer * Local cabinet maker * Ecotourism operator |
| Neutral Enviromental Assessment Chairperson | |

1. **Take on a Different Viewpoint**

Students will create an argument for or against the development proposal depending on the role card that they received. They should consider the following perspectives:

* + Evaluate how the development will impact their jobs and/or local industries
  + Evaluate how the development will affect their personal lives as private citizens

They should come up with reasons for or against the project in order to create a thorough argument. Each role should also compile a list of questions that can be asked of others at the town hall meeting

1. **Rehearse the roles**

Use appropriate verbal persuasion techniques to rehearse your argument to a partner.

1. **Present your argument at a town hall meeting**

The neutral party will review the Rules of Discussion and chair the meeting. The chairperson can hold a vote at the end of the meeting to determine if the proposal will pass or not.

## Rules of Discussion

* Chair welcomes everyone and outlines reason for the meeting
* Chair advises team members that each must speak for at least one minute, presenting their viewpoints
* Speakers indicate that they would like to speak by raising their hands.
* If more than one speaker raises their hand, the Chair will call their names in the order in which they will speak.
* Class cannot interrupt while someone is speaking.
* Speakers must stand to address the group.
* Chair calls time at the end of one minute and thanks the speaker.
* Chair asks for the next speaker.
* Chair calls an adjournment at the end of the meeting.

ROLE CARDS

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| --- | --- |
| Forest Worker You live in town and realize that the highway will reduce the amount of forest, b ut you also know that in order to construct the highway the lumber company is going to hire loggers, and you’ll most likely be one of them.  **Perspective: Supportive of highway, but may also have objections.** | Land Developer You live in town and have been waiting for a new road to open so that more people will want to live here, allowing you to build a new housing development.  **Perspective: Supportive of highway, but may also have objections** |
| Department of Highways Official You live in town and are concerned about how the highway development will affect drinking water quality. The highway will reduce the amount of forest, this means less natural filtering of rain and meltwater.  **Perspective: Against the highway, but may also see the benefits** | Local Homeowner You like the view from your house and enjoy the peace and quiet. The highway will spoil the view, add noise and pollution, reduce the amount of forest and could negatively affect watersheds.  **Perspective: Against the highway, but may also see benefits.** |
| **Small fish farm Owner**  You live in town but own a small trout famr on a nearby lake, downstream of the river. You feel the reduction of the forest will mean less water filtering and that the highway salt run off will flow into the streams and river.  **Perspective: Against the highway, but may also see benefits.** | Biologist You live in town and worry about the destruction of the forest, that local water will not be filtered as much and salt runoff from the highway will go into the streams and river. You are also concerned about diminished biodiversity  Perspective: Against the highway, but may also see benefits. |
| **Local Cabinetmaker**  You live in town and make beautiful cabinets from local wood. The highway will reduce the amount of forest from where you can harvest wood. The image of your furniture coming from an unspoiled wilderness area will be lost.  **Perspective: Against the highway, but may also see benefits.** | **Ecotourism Operator**  You live in town and use the forest as the ideal place to take your customers for viewing and photographing creatures in their natural habitat. The highway will destroy much of this habitat.  **Perspective: Against the highway, but may also see benefits.** |
| **Environmental Assessment Chairperson**  You are running the meeting and must ensure that all people follow the rules of discussion.  **Perpective: Neutral** |  |

Town Hall Debate Rubric – Highway Building

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 |
| **Knowledge and Understanding**  Information  Understanding | Information had several inaccuracies OR was usually not clear.  The team did not show an adequate understanding of the topic. | Most information presented in the debate was clear but sometimes was not accurate.  Seemed to understand the main points of the topic and presented those with ease. | Most information presented in the debate was clear, accurate and thorough.  Clearly understood the topic in-depth and presented information with ease. | All information presented in the debate was clear, accurate and thorough.  Clearly understood the topic in-depth and presented information forcefully and convincingly. |
| **Communication**  Presentation  Respectful of other Classmates | Presentation style that did not keep the attention of the audience.  Statements, responses and/or body language were consistently not respectful. | Sometimes used gestures, eye contact, and tone of voice that kept the attention of the audience.  Most statements and responses were respectful and in appropriate language, but there was one sarcastic remark. | Usually used gestures, eye contact, tone of voice and a level of enthusiasm in a way that kept the attention of the audience.  Statements and responses were respectful and used appropriate language, but once or twice body language was not. | Consistently used gestures, eye contact, tone of voice and a level of enthusiasm in a way that kept the attention of the audience.  All statements, body language, and responses were respectful and were in appropriate language. |
| **Thinking and Inquiry**  Rebuttal | Counter-arguments were not accurate and/or relevant | Most counter-arguments were accurate and relevant, but several were weak. | Most counter-arguments were accurate, relevant, and strong. | All counter-arguments were accurate, relevant and strong. |
| **Application**  Use of Facts | Some major points were not supported. | Every major point was supported with facts, statistics and/or examples, but the relevance of some was questionable. | Every major point was adequately supported with relevant facts, statistics and/or examples. | Every major point was well supported with several relevant facts, statistics and/or examples. |